

# **\*\*\* Press Release \*\*\***

## ***Summary of Recent Election Law Changes***

### **Same Day Registration**

Persons who are not registered to vote in a county can no longer register to vote in person during the one-stop early voting period. Same day registration is no longer an option. Qualified persons wanting to vote in an election must register to vote no later than 25 days before the date of the election. State law does not permit voter registration between a first primary and a second primary.

### **One-stop Voting**

One-stop early voting will now begin on the second Thursday prior to the date of an election instead of the third Thursday prior to the date of the election

### **No Out of Precinct Voting**

Voters who vote on Election Day must vote at the polling place for their correct precinct, based on their residential address as of 30 days prior to the date of the election. County boards of elections will not be able to count any provisional ballot for a voter that does not vote at his or her correctly assigned precinct on Election Day.

### **Photo ID**

Voters will not be required to show a photo in order to vote during the 2014 Statewide Primary and General Election period. When presenting to vote, a voter simply needs to state his or her current name and current address. As long as his or her name is on the list of registered voters in the precinct, he or she will be given a regular ballot and permitted to vote. Voters who present to vote in person (during one-stop early voting or on Election Day) this year will be given instructions that starting in 2016, voters will be required to show a photo ID when voting in person. Voters will be provided with a list of photo ID that is acceptable for purposes of voting in this state and will be asked if they have one or more of these forms of ID. If a voter indicates that he or she does not have a photo ID that will be acceptable for purposes of voting, then the voter will be asked to sign an Acknowledgment of No Photo ID. These voters will be given instructions on how they can obtain a no-fee photo ID from the North Carolina DMV.

### **Provisional Voting**

Whenever a voter is offered a provisional ballot, the election official issuing the ballot will now mark in writing or other means on the ballot that it is a provisional ballot. If a provisional ballot is incorrectly placed into the voting equipment at the voting site, any ballot that is marked as a provisional ballot will be retrieved. Any provisional ballot that is cast outside of a voter's correctly assigned precinct on Election Day will not be counted.

## **Absentee Voting**

Significant changes were made to the method of requesting and returning an absentee ballot by mail. All requests for a civilian absentee ballot must be made on the State Absentee Ballot Request Form. Hand-written requests will no longer be accepted. The voter or requestor must provide the voter's date of birth and identification information that can be matched to the voter's record in the list of registered voters. A voter must now vote his or her ballot in the presence of two witnesses. A voter may vote his or her ballot in the presence of one witness only if the witness is a Notary Public. A comprehensive summary of absentee voting requirements in North Carolina follows this section.

## ***Absentee Voting Summary***

Any North Carolina registered voter who is qualified to vote in an election can request and receive a mail-in absentee ballot for any election, whether it is a statewide primary, general election, or special election on constitutional amendments, referenda or bond proposals, or any municipal election in which absentee voting is allowed. No special circumstance or excuse is needed to receive and vote a mail-in absentee ballot.

### **How to Request an Absentee Ballot**

To receive a mail-in absentee ballot for an election, a voter or the voter's near relative or legal guardian must use the State Absentee Ballot Request Form to request the ballot. (A "near relative" is defined as the voter's spouse, brother, sister, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, stepparent, or stepchild.) Request forms are available on the State Board of Elections' website, at the State Board of Elections' office, and at county boards of elections' offices. The form may be reproduced. A signed and completed State Absentee Ballot Request Form must be received by the county board of elections' office no later than 5:00 p.m. on the last Tuesday prior to the date of the election for which the ballot is being requested. The form may be mailed, faxed, e-mailed or delivered in person. A request form must be received for each primary or election that a voter desires to vote a by-mail absentee ballot.

### **Completing the State Absentee Ballot Request Form**

The State Absentee Ballot Request Form may only be signed by the voter or a near relative or legal guardian of the voter. When completing the form, the voter or the requestor must sign and provide the voter's name, residential address, date of birth, and an identification number for the voter (NC DMV driver license number, NC DMV identification card number, or the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number.) If an identification number is not provided on the form, then the requestor must submit one of the documents listed below along with the completed request form:

- A copy of a current and valid photo identification.
- A copy of one of the following documents that shows the name and address of the voter: a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document.

If a person other than the voter (a near relative or legal guardian) makes the request, then the requestor must also provide his or her name and residential address on the request form. If requesting a ballot for a partisan primary, and the voter is registered Unaffiliated, the voter or requestor should indicate the ballot preference for the voter (which party's primary in which the voter wishes to participate). Finally, the voter or requestor must provide the address where the absentee balloting materials are to be mailed, if different than the voter's residential address. If a registered North Carolina voter (including eligible dependents) is absent due to military service or is currently living overseas, then only the actual voter should complete the State Absentee Ballot Request Form in order to afford special voting rights to the voter. More information for military and overseas voters is available on the State Board of Elections website.

### **Receiving the Ballot**

If a valid request is received, the county board of elections will mail the voter absentee balloting materials to the address provided on the request form when absentee ballots are available. Absentee ballots are available:

- 50 days prior to the date of the May Primary.
- 60 days prior to the date of the General Election.

The absentee balloting materials will consist of:

- a blank official absentee ballot;
- absentee voting instructions; and
- the Absentee Application and Certificate found on the back of the return ballot-container envelope.

### **Voting an Absentee Ballot**

In the presence of two witnesses (or one witness if the witness is a Notary Public), the voter should mark the ballot, or cause it to be marked according to his or her instructions. Once the ballot is marked, the voter or a person assisting the voter must seal the ballot in the container-return envelope and must then complete the Absentee Application and Certificate on the back of the ballot container-return envelope. The voter's witnesses must complete and sign the envelope in the space designated as Witnesses' Certification (or Alternative Notary-Witness Certification, if using a Notary Public as the witness). If someone assisted the voter, the assister must sign and date the certificate as well.

### **Returning the Voted Ballot**

Once the Absentee Application and Certificate is fully executed with all relevant signatures, the voted ballot (contained inside of the container-return envelope) must be returned to the County Board of Elections no later than 5:00 p.m. on the date of the election. The envelope may be mailed or delivered in person. Ballots received after 5:00 p.m. on Election Day will be timely ONLY if they are received by mail and bear a postmark that is dated on or before the date of the election and are received no later than 5:00 p.m. on the third day following the election.

## *What to Expect at One-stop Voting Sites and Polling Places*

### **No Straight-Party Voting**

On the ballots for the General Election, there will no longer be a place that allows a voter with one mark to vote for the candidates of a party for more than one office. Straight-party voting was eliminated in North Carolina with the recent election law changes. Voters may only vote for each partisan contest item on the General Election ballot separately.

### **Voter ID Education**

At any primary and election between May 1, 2014, and January 1, 2016, any registered voter may present photo identification to the elections officials at the voting place but may not be required to do so. Each voter presenting in person will be notified that photo identification will be needed to vote beginning in 2016 and will be asked if he or she has one of the forms of photo identification appropriate for voting. If the voter indicates he or she does not have one of the types of photo identification appropriate for voting, the voter will be asked to sign an acknowledgment of the photo identification requirement and be given a list of types of photo identification appropriate for voting and information on how to obtain those types of photo identification. The list of names of those voters who signed an acknowledgment is a public record.

Under long-standing federal and state law, certain first-time voters may be asked to show identification if they did not provide identification information when they initially registered to vote in the county. These first-time voters may show either a current and valid photo identification or a copy of one of the following documents that shows the name and address of the voter: a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document.

### **Issues or Complaints at Voting Sites**

Any issue or complaint relating to a voting site should first be brought to the attention of the polling place's Chief Judge (or, in the case of a one-stop early voting site, staff or manager of the voting site). If the issue cannot be resolved by the election official at the voting site, contact the local County Board of Elections office.